



MISSISSIPPI KIDS COUNT
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FOR RELEASE
March 1, 2016

Mississippi KIDS COUNT Releases 2016 Fact Book Marking Ten Years at the SSRC
Annual Publication Highlights Latest Data Snapshot on Mississippi Education Status

STARKVILLE – Although Mississippi ranks 50th across most indicators of child well-being, the state has seen some improvement over the last ten years, according to the Mississippi KIDS COUNT *2016 Fact Book*, released today. Nine of ten indicators saw slight measures of improvement while children living in single-parent families remained the same (47%). The look at the last decade marks the tenth anniversary of Mississippi State University’s Social Science Research Center being the KIDS COUNT grantee. Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the state-based KIDS COUNT network has provided data on child well-being for twenty six years.

Actor Morgan Freeman, a Mississippi native, wrote the book’s foreword and shared his thoughts on the importance of investing in quality early care and education. “If we truly want to increase Mississippians’ chances to thrive economically and educationally, we need to make sure all children in Mississippi have access to quality early childhood programs that develop their language and literacy,” said Freeman. “When we invest in the systems that support learning, we ensure a more socially and economically thriving Mississippi.”

For the second consecutive year, the *Fact Book* provides a data snapshot on the status of education for Mississippi’s children. Included in the book are sections on the cost benefits of early childhood education and the health determinants of early school success. Based on the latest data analysis by Robert Lynch and Kavya Vaghul (2015), the projections of annual benefits of implementing universal Pre-K to Mississippi children would total \$2.6 Billion by 2050. This reflects a return on investment of \$9.10 to each dollar invested for Mississippi, compared to \$8.90 to each dollar invested for the United States.

“Our overall goal—then and now—is to be the premier data source on children and families for the state of Mississippi in the areas of health, education, economic well-being and child safety,” said Dr. Linda Southward, director of Mississippi KIDS COUNT. “While building and maintaining a foundation of reliable data is key to monitoring changes over time, our higher aim is to provide data that can be used as a catalyst for improving outcomes for Mississippi’s children.”

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The Mississippi KIDS COUNT 2016 Fact Book will be available March 1 at 12:01 am CST at www.kidscount.ssrc.msstate.edu. Additional information is available in the KIDS COUNT Data Center which also contains the most recent national, state, and local data on hundreds of indicators on child well-being. Mississippi KIDS COUNT is part of the national KIDS COUNT network of state-based organizations supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.